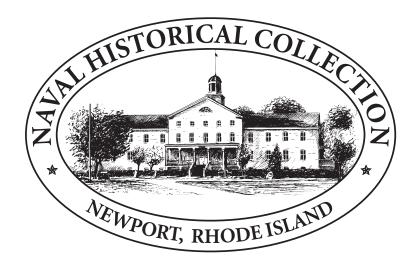
Register of the Benedict J. Semmes Papers



Naval War College Newport, RI



REGISTER OF THE PAPERS OF BENEDICT J. SEMMES

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Manuscript Register Series No. 25

Naval Historical Collection Naval War College, Newport, RI 1995

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Vice Admiral Benedict J. Semmes was born on April 8, 1913, in Memphis, Tennessee, to a family whose roots go back to the early history of this country. He was educated in Memphis and graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1934.

After receiving his commission as an ensign, he served in the USS MISSISSIPPI for three years, then was assigned to the Battle Force, and later the USS CLAXTON and the USS BADGER. When World War II began, he was in the USS WASP which saw action in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theaters. He was with the ship when she was sunk in the Solomon Islands by a Japanese submarine in September 1942. Assigned next to the USS SIGSBEE, he participated in the assault on Tarawa. Later in the war, he commanded the USS PICKING which saw action at the Battles of Leyte Gulf, Lingayen, Corregidor and Okinawa.

Semmes considered himself a destroyer sailor and he saw extensive service in these ships. He commanded a destroyer division in the Korean War, he was chief of staff to the Atlantic Fleet Destroyer Force Commander, commanded the USS SHENANDOAH in the Lebanon Crisis of 1958 and was Commander of the Middle East Force from 1962 to 1963. He rose to become Commander of Destroyers and Cruisers, Atlantic Fleet in 1963 and 1964 and became Commander of the U.S. Second Fleet and NATO Atlantic Striking Fleet.

Admiral Semmes was a graduate of the National War College in 1958 and held important shore billets, including Chief of the

Bureau of Naval Personnel, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations and President of the Naval War College, 1971-72, his last active duty post before retirement.

In retirement, Admiral Semmes divided his time between his residences in Washington, D.C. and Wonalancet, New Hampshire. He died on June 11, 1994, in Virginia Beach, Virginia. He is survived by his wife, Katharine Ainsworth Semmes; two daughters, Walden S. Morton and Amy Semmes; and a son, Dr. Benedict J. Semmes III. He was predeceased by a daughter, Raphaelle J. Semmes.

Admiral Semmes was a recipient of the Navy Cross, Bronze Star, Distinguished Service Medal, American Defense Service Medal, American Campaign Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, The Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the Navy Occupation Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and the United Nations Service Medal. He was a member of the New York Yacht Club, the Army-Navy Country Club, the Bald Peak Colony Club and the Chevy Chase Country Club.

CHRONOLOGY OF NAVAL SERVICE

OF

BENEDICT J. SEMMES

1913	Born, Memphis, Tennessee, April 8
1934	Graduated from U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD
1934-1937	USS MISSISSIPPI (BB-41); Promoted to Lieutenant (jg.)
1937-1938	Commander, Battle Force, Staff
1938	USS OMAHA (CL-4) and USS CLAXTON (DD-571)
1938-1940	USS BADGER (DD-126)
1941	Promoted to Lieutenant
1940-1942	USS WASP (CV-7)
1942-1943	USS SIGSBEE (DD-502), Executive Officer; Promoted to
	Lieutenant Commander
1943-1944	Officer in Charge, Fleet Gunnery and Torpedo School,
	Pearl Harbor and West Coast Sound School, San Diego,
	CA; Promoted to Commander
1944-1945	USS PICKING (DD 685), CO
1945-1946	Bureau of Personnel, Plans and Operations Division
1946	Headquarters, Eighth Naval District, Aide to Com-
	mandant
1946-1948	Headquarters, Eighth Naval District, Acting General
	Inspector, Gulf Sea Frontier and Eighth Naval Dis-
	trict
1948-1949	USS AULT (DD-698), CO
1949-1951	Commander, US Naval Forces, Germany, Staff

1951-1953 Bureau of Naval Personnel, Washington, D.C., Commander Detail Officer; Promoted to Captain 1953-1954 Destroyer Division 302, Commander Commander Destroyer Force, Atlantic Fleet, Readiness 1953-1954 and Training Officer Commander Destroyer Force, Atlantic Fleet, Aide and 1955-1957 Chief of Staff 1957-1958 National War College, Student USS SHENANDOAH (AD-26), CO 1958 Destroyer Flotilla Three, Commander; Promoted to Rear 1958-1959 Admiral Bureau of Naval Personnel, Assistant Chief for Plans 1959-1962 Middle East Force, Commander 1962-1963 Cruiser-Destroyer Force, Atlantic Fleet, Commander; 1963-1964 Promoted to Vice-Admiral 1964-1968 Chief of Naval Personnel (Manpower and Reserve) 1968-1970 Second Fleet, Commander Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Fleet Operations 1970-1971 and Readiness 1971-1972 Naval War College, President; Retired from U.S. Navy 1994 Died, June 11, Virginia Beach, VA

DESCRIPTION OF PAPERS

The Bernard J. Semmes papers were deposited in the Naval Historical Collection in two lots: the first lot, which contained the admiral's Naval War College correspondence, was located at the College and transferred to the archives in 1971; the second lot was presented to the Naval War College Foundation by Admiral Semmes in 1988. The latter deposit contains the greater part of the collection.

The collection consists of five boxes; it is divided into Biographical data forms Series I. His official Navy biography as well as his transcript of naval service can be found Series II contains official naval papers spanning the admiral's naval career from 1934 to 1972. Included in this series are fitness reports, naval orders, change of duty, retirement papers and recommendations for awards and citations. Series III contains correspondence, including both letters sent and received. Most of it consists of letters sent and received while president of the Naval War College, 1971-1972, although there is some personal correspondence. Speeches given at commissioning ceremonies and change of commands make up Series IV. Series V, Writings, contains article by Kit Semmes, the admiral's wife, on the Washington Navy Yard, their year in Bahrain in 1962 and reflections on her life as a Navy wife. Semmes' National War College thesis, 1958, is located here. Miscellany, Series VI, consists of certificates, newspaper clippings, programs, invitations, menus, imprints, books, naval and personal photographs and a genealogy entitled Semmes America. The manuscripts cover the years 1934-1985.

The appendix to this register lists other items authored by Semmes in the Naval War College archives, as well as his published articles.

The Semmes papers are the only collection in existence pertaining to the admiral's career. They are an important addition to the College's collection of presidential papers. While the correspondence portion of the collection documents his Naval War College presidency, the naval papers portion encompasses his entire career.

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION 63

ARRANGEMENT OF PAPERS

OF

BENEDICT J. SEMMES

Series I

Biographical Information

Box Folder

1 Navy Biography, Transcript of Naval Service, Statement of Personal History, Record of Emergency Data, Who's Who in America, 1974-1975.

Series II

Official Naval Papers, 1934-1976

- 1 Official Naval Papers, including change of duty,
 awards, commendations, promotions, temporary appointments, fitness reports, orders, and temporary
 appointments, 1934-1952
 - Official Naval Papers, including change of duty, orders, appointments, retirement and release from active duty, 1954-1976
 - Official Naval Papers, recommendations for awards and citations, 1945-1972

Series III

Correspondence, 1945-1987

Box Folder

- 1 Letters sent to his parents, Benedict J. and Amy
 Lardner Semmes, 1931-1939
 - 2 Letters received, 1954-1971
 - 3 Letters received, 1972-1987
 - Naval War College Correspondence, Letters sent and received regarding Beaufort, South Carolina trip,
 - 5 Letters sent and received regarding Chamber of Commerce, Newport, RI, 1971
 - 6 Letters sent and received regarding Coast Guard
 Advisor, 1971-1972
 - 7 Letters of Congratulations sent and received, 1971
 - 8 Letters received regarding Naval War College Military Faculty, 1971
 - 9 Letters sent and received regarding trip to England, 1972
 - 10 Letters received regarding Global Strategy Discussions, 1971
 - 11 Letters sent and received regarding Indonesia Trip, 1972
 - 12 Letters sent and received regarding International Conferences and War Games, 1971-1972

Box Folder

- 13 Letters sent and received regarding Massachusetts
 Maritime Academy, 1971
- 14 Letters sent and received regarding memberships in Newport, RI Organizations
- 15 Memoranda sent and received regarding Naval War College matters
- 16 Letters received regarding Frank C. Nash Memorial Lecture, 1972
- 17 Letters sent and received regarding the Naval War College Foundation, 1971-1972
- 18 Letters sent and received regarding Navy League, Atlanta, 1971
- 19 Letters sent and received regarding Navy League, Boston, 1971
- 20 Letters sent and received regarding Newport Country Club, 1972
- 21 Letters sent and received regarding Harvard University Peace Program, 1971
- 22 Letters sent and received regarding the International Seapower Symposium, 1971
- 23 Letters sent and received regarding future trips, 1971-1972
- 24 Letters sent and received regarding visit of VADM

 John Maas, RNN, 1972

Series IV

Speeches, 1972

Box Folder

- 1 Speech at change of command, Destroyer Flotilla
 Three, 1959; Speech at commissioning of USS
 AINSWORTH, 1972
 - Speeches, Change of Command/Retirement ceremony, Naval War College, 1972
 - 3 Speeches, tape of ADM Semmes' farewell ceremony,
 Pringle Hall, Naval War College, June 1, 1972

Series V

Writings, 1958-1973

- 2 1 "Sea Power in the Struggle for the Uncommitted

 States," National War College, Thesis, March 3, 1958
 - "Bahrain, Pearl of the Persian Gulf" by Katharine Ainsworth Semmes, U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, May 1966
 - 3 "A Historic Heritage, The Washington Navy Yard," by Katharine Ainsworth Semmes, 1972
 - 4 "Reflections on the Navy Life" by Katharine Ainsworth Semmes in Shipmate, March 1973

Series VI

Miscellany

- 2 1 Certificates, Undated 1985
 - War Diary, USS PICKING (DD 685) October 1, 1944 -July 4, 1945
- 3 1 Newspaper Clippings, undated
 - Newspaper Clippings, 1958-1971
 - Newspaper Clippings, 1972-1987
 - 4 Programs, 1958-1961
 - 5 Programs, 1963-1979
 - 6 Invitations, 1965-1987
 - 7 Membership Cards and Passports
 - 8 Menus, Navy Day, 1964
 - 9 Booklets, Cruiser Destroyermen, 1957, 1963
 - 10 Microfiche, USS CLAXTON (DD-571)
 - 11 Booklets, USS WASP (CV-7) Stinger, 1981-1984
 - 12 Booklet, USS WASP (CV-7) Stinger, 1976
 - 13 Report of loss of USS WASP (CV-7), 1942
 - 14 Welcome Aboard Pamphlet, USS SEMMES (DDG-18)
 - 15 Lyrics to Songs, Poems, Narrative on Bass Fishing,
 Quotation from George Bernard Shaw
 - Books, The Arnheiter Affair by Neil Sheehan and The ROA Story by John T. Carlton and John F. Slinkman

Box Folder

- Photographs of naval career, including portraits, change of command ceremonies, reunion of USS PICK-ING, commissionings and other naval ceremonies, Family photographs
- 5 1 Genealogy entitled Semmes America compiled by

 Anderson Humphreys and Curt Guenther. Published by

 Humphreys, Ink, Inc; Memphis, TN, 1989

APPENDIX

OTHER RESEARCH SOURCE MATERIALS NAVAL WAR COLLEGE ARCHIVES

Record Group 4, Publications
Semmes, Benedict J., The Navy Staff, 1971.
, Naval Warfare. 1972.
Record Group 15, Lectures
Semmes, Benedict J. Leadership and the Military Commander,
1965.
ASW Capabilities of the Destroyer Force, January
23, 1964.
Record Group 28, Presidents' Files
Biographical Data
Obituary, Newport Daily News, June 18, 1994

Published Articles

Semmes, Benedict J. "A Perspective for the 1972 Global Strategy
Discussions." Naval War College Review (June, 1972), 1-5.